

## Characteristic Knee Pain in Children

By Ben Benjamin, PhD

**Question:** What condition causes pain at the tibial tubercle in preteens and young teenagers when they are climbing stairs or running?

**Answer:** Osgood-Schlatter's disease.

This condition - named after Drs.

Osgood and Schlatter - is not really a disease at all. It occurs in growing children, generally between the ages of 11 and 14, as a result of excessive athletic activity.

Osgood-Schlatter is a severe sprain to the inferior portion of the patella ligament, which is also part of the quadriceps tendon mechanism. Often, there is tearing of ligament tissue from the bone, and an enlargement of the tibial tubercle (also called tibial tuberosity) - the little bump below the patella at the top of the tibia. Although the condition usually heals by itself, it may take a long time: from six months to several years.

Massage therapy can ease the pain, but only time or proliferate injections can reattach the fibers. A resisted-extension knee test with little force will usually cause pain at the tubercle. To compensate for the injury, the patient may move differently; thus, a therapist may consider evaluation and treatment of tension patterns resulting from the compensation.

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